CLAIMS:

1.   A method for creating and retrieving data records comprising the steps of:

organizing a plurality of categories into a plurality of hierarchical levels;

assigning a category identifier to each respective of said plurality of categories, said category identifier including the identifier for each category linked to said each respective category in each of said plurality of hierarchical levels that is above said level of said each respective category;

creating a plurality of data records for a plurality of data entries, each of said data entries having at least one attribute that corresponds to one of said categories;

storing said category identifier that corresponds to said at least one attribute of each particular data entry in said data record for said particular data entry;

receiving a query that corresponds to one or more of said categories; and,

retrieving at least one of said data records that include a category identifier corresponding to said query.

2.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined by claim 1 and further including the step of storing said category identifiers in a look-up table, and using said look-up table to create said data records and to process said query.

3.   A method for creating data records as defined by claim 1 wherein said character identifiers comprise alphanumeric strings.

4.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined by claim 1 wherein said query corresponds to a plurality of categories related by at least one Boolean logic operator.

1   5.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 1 and further including the steps of assigning a weighting to at least a
3 portion of said categories.

1   6.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 5 wherein the method further includes the step of using said weightings
3 to respond to said query.

1   7.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 6 wherein the step of using said weightings comprises selecting one of
3 said data records containing a higher weighted category identifier that corresponds
4 to said one or more category contained in said query over a second of said data
5 records that contains a lower weighted category identifier that corresponds to said
6 one or more category contained in said query.

1   8.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 5 and further including the step of including said weighting in said
3 category identifier.

1   9.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 5 wherein said weighting is represented by at least one alphanumeric
3 character.

1   10.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 5 wherein the method further includes the step of using said query to
3 modify at least one of said weightings.

1   11.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined
2 by claim 1 wherein said query includes a user identifier, and wherein the method

3   further includes the step of using said query to determine a category weighting for

4   said user.

1   12.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined

2   by claim 11 and further including the steps of storing said user category

3   weightings in a user look-up table that includes user category weightings for a

4   plurality of users.

1   13.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined

2   by claim 11 wherein the step of using said query to determine a category

3   weighting for said user comprises changing a stored user weighting for categories

4   contained in said query.

1   14.   A computer program product embodying the method of claim

2   1, the computer program product including computer executable instructions

3   embedded in a computer readable medium that when read by a computer cause the

4   computer to execute the steps of the method.

1   15.   A computer program product as defined by claim 14, wherein

2   the program instructions when executed further cause the computer to provide a

3   graphical user interface.

1   16.   A method for creating and retrieving data records as defined

2   by claim 1 wherein each of said category identifier embody implicit knowledge

3   regarding the placement of the category identifier within said hierarchical

4   arrangement of categories.

1   17. A method for creating data records comprising the steps of:

2   creating a hierarchical structure of a plurality of categories linked

3 over a plurality of descending levels;

4   assigning a category identifier to each respective of said plurality of

5 categories, said category identifier corresponding to one of said plurality of

6 descending levels and including the identifier for each category linked thereto in

7 each of said plurality of levels that is above said level of said each respective

8 category to thereby embody implicit knowledge in said category identifier;

9   creating a data record for each of a plurality of data entries, each of

10 said data entries having a plurality of attributes that correspond to one each of said

11 categories;

12   storing said category identifiers that correspond to said attributes of

13 said each respective data entry in said data record of said respective data entry;

14 and,

15   applying a weighting to at least a portion of said categories.

1   18. A computer program product for creating and retrieving data

2 records, the program product including computer executable instructions stored on

3 a computer readable medium, the executable steps when executed causing a

4 computer to:

5   create a hierarchical structure of a plurality of categories linked over

6 a plurality of descending levels;

7   assign a category identifier to each respective of said plurality of

8 categories, said category identifier including the identifier for each category linked

9 to said each respective category in each of said plurality of levels that is above

10 said level of said each respective category;

11   create a plurality of data records for a plurality of data entries, one

12 each of said plurality of data records corresponding to one each of said plurality of

13   data entries, each of said data entries having at least one attribute that corresponds

14   to one of said categories;

15   store said category identifier that correspond to said at least one

16   attribute of each particular data entry in said data record for said particular data

17   entry;

18   receive a query that corresponds to one or more of said categories;

19   and,

20   retrieve all of said data records that include a category identifier

21   corresponding to said query.

1   19.   A computer program product as defined by claim 18 wherein

2   the executable instructions when executed further cause said computer to apply a

3   weighting to at least a portion of said categories, said weighting operative to rank

4   said categories within one of said plurality of levels.

1   20.   A computer program product as defined by claim 18 wherein

2   said query includes a user identifier, and wherein the executable instructions when

3   executed further cause said computer to modify a stored user weighting

4   corresponding to said user identifier in said query and based on said categories

5   specified in said query.

1   21.   A computer program product as defined by claim 18 wherein

2   said query corresponds to a particular category on a particular level, and wherein

3   the executable instructions cause the computer to retrieve all of said data records

4   that include said category identifier for categories linked to said particular

5   category on levels below said particular level.